

PUBLICS

YOUTH

PUBLICS

PUBLICS

PUBLICS

PUBLICS

PUBLICS

HELSINKI

PUBLICS

YOUTH

PUBLICS

PUBLICS

PUBLICS Youth 2022 In Conversation

A podcast by PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board 2022

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
ANASTASIIA AND RÓZA IN CONVERSATION
VANESSA AND ERIKA IN CONVERSATION
VALERIIA AND MANDA IN CONVERSATION
THANK YOU

PUBLICS Youth 2022 In Conversation

A podcast by PUBLICS Youth Advisory Board 2022

ANASTASIIA
LAPTEVA:

Hi! This is Asya, Erika, Monda, Róza, Valeriia and Vanessa. We are the Board members of PUBLICS Youth 2022: a collective of young people initiated by PUBLICS. During our work in PUBLICS in 2022, we met art professionals, produced a public presentation, travelled and participated in international art workshops, and met the youth groups of Index Teen Advisory Board from Sweden and PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board from Norway.

RÓZA
TURUNEN:

Our shared enthusiasm and curiosity about art and its various forms have brought us together. In the past year, PUBLICS Youth have given rise to crucial conversations, critical thoughts, relevant to our own practices and friendships. In this podcast we will share some of our conversations on voice, playfulness, and working together.

ANASTASIIA AND RÓZA IN CONVERSATION

01:03

AL:

Hi, my name is Asya, I'm 20 years old, and I study at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Academy of Fine Arts.

RT:

My name is Róza, I'm 22 years old, I study at Taidekoulu Maa: it's my third year, and I do Visual Arts.

AL:

How can our collective be playful when we have been given the voice, and the privilege to use it?

RT:

I feel like even though PUBLICS is a really small institution, there is always some stigma around authority and institutions [in general]. I think [that] if the change [towards] playfulness doesn't come from the institution, it is never going to change: the bigger the institution is, I think it's better that the authorities are playful, because otherwise playfulness is always going to stick in the underground culture. When a collective, for example, becomes an institution, it always gets more serious and the atmosphere changes. I think that the change is not supposed to come [only] from the small institutions, rather than the big ones.

AL:

We have PUBLICS Youth, so we represent the "the youth" of an organisation, and to me it seems [that], because we're the youth, we can be more playful with how we go about some problems. So what do you think of our youth collective, and how can we change things from our perspective, as well?

RT:

I feel like we have already done it during the past year; in a way

that we've been participating in workshops and in stuff that you have no previous experience of, and you can still do it 100%, and with this I mean for example the "voice workshops" with Laia [Estruch].

SOUND RECORDING FROM OPEN REHEARSAL WORKSHOPS WITH LAIA ESTRUCH AND IRINA MUTT

Irina Mutt: One, two, three....

Sounds of PUBLICS Youth warming up their voices.

AL:

Yes I think that for me, [because of] this playfulness especially in the workshops with Irina and Laia, it was easier to engage with the voice and with the body; although at first it seemed to be really weird, funny, and something that I wouldn't expect that we would be doing in PUBLICS when I was signing up; but it was a mind-breaking experience for me. Through this playfulness I could open up more ideas that I wouldn't have thought of before.

RT:

Yes, and in the question that we have been "given the voice", and privilege to use it... I feel like when you have the privilege of doing something, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to take yourself immediately super seriously, or otherwise it's just going to keep up with the structure of power, and that "those who have the privilege must act on it". I feel that we should be breaking [away from] that set up.

AL:

How does collective work change the myth of the individual artist?

RT:

I feel like the myth of the individual artist has to do a lot with the myth of the "artist as genius"; and if you think about artists [in] that way: that you should be, either a genius, or you are nothing, it makes no sense. Also because art doesn't happen in a space vacuum: you always need other people and you always need the world around you to inspire you. So I feel like working in a collective is actually a way to support your work. So it does change the myth of the individual artist: also with the idea that you don't have to be some kind of superhuman to make art - because it doesn't actually go that way, and I think it's really important that there are collectives and that people work together.

AL:

Yes, I really agree with you, because when thinking about this question I was also wondering that when I make art I always share it with my friends, and we always discuss the topics that I portray in my art. It's always a collective work. Sometimes we meet in cafés, for example, to discuss it; and then for me this collective work is just admitting that you are always working in a collec-

- RT:

tive. To me and my own artistic practice, it was quite a groundbreaking realisation: because before I was feeling bad that I would always ask my friends to help me, for example to think about something - it seemed to me that everyone around me who made art was this “individual genius”.
- AL:

I think it has to do a lot with opinions as well, because it’s really dangerous to think that your opinions would come out of you [only] and you are the one who is actually coming up with them; actually, it’s the other way around: that your surroundings change you, and your opinions change by the people whom you’re with.
- AL:

It also makes me think about the power of community. It takes me back again to the workshops with Laia and Irina, and how, at first, I felt so shy to just use my voice to make these “bird sounds”, for example.
- SOUND RECORDING FROM OPEN REHEARSAL WORKSHOPS WITH LAIA ESTRUCH AND IRINA MUTT*
Irina Mutt: One, two, three....
Sounds of PUBLICS Youth imitating loud birds.
- AL:

...but then because we were all making [the sounds], I felt better and more powerful to use my voice, even in that sense. If you think about something more political: it also works in a similar way, I think.
- RT:

Yeah and I also think that it changes the view on the individual, overall: when you think about it in a political way, we are told that we should always survive, “it’s just you and nobody’s going to help you” - society is giving you this thinking. I had a realisation the other day: I realised that actually we are here because of other people; you are not a robot.
- AL:

It’s also different in other cultures. When I encounter people from other cultures, they might treat this individuality really differently than us who grow up in the Western world.
- RT:

I feel also that our - as you said - Western word is tending to like the idea of creating something from nothing, and that’s just an illusion.
- AL:

I was just reading a text the other day about how the idea of the individual artist even came to place in the Enlightenment, and there is always this assumption that some Leonardo da Vinci always works alone, and he did the physics, the engineering, and the arts... It always makes me wonder: was it actually like that?

PUBLICS

- RT: Do we just not see it in history, or is it not written in history?
- AL: Yeah, I have a gut feeling about it that you're right!
So, Asya, can you imagine a future where institutions are less serious and more playful?
- RT: To be honest I find it really hard to imagine. I feel like it depends a lot on the scale of the institution: I feel like for PUBLICS, because it's quite small, I feel like it's much easier; but for a bigger institution - when I think about, for example, my University - it's much harder for them to be playful, because their identity and their image comes in, and this image was built over decades at least.
- AL: A lot would have to change, starting from the idea of authority: can you live in a world without authorities, and still respect each other? When it comes to institutions, it's always about authority.
- RT: If a bigger institution actually becomes playful: what does this mean to you? How do you imagine it being in place? Can you describe it?
- AL: If it became true, the whole artworld would change, because now we're competing with each other all the time in this field. If there would be change in the institutions, you could see the change in the relationships between people, and between artists.
- RT: You were talking about the competitiveness of the artworld, and I feel that it is also connected with this [idea of] collectivity and collective work. An institution can become more playful, if it's also less hierarchical and if there's less power in the hands of just one person.
- AL: From what I have noticed, it is really competitive in Finland. It is also because the galleries [rent] are paid by the artists and there is not that much money in the field. We have only one school like yours [University of Arts Helsinki] and there is not much diversity in the field. But I feel that this is breaking right now: our school Taidekoulu Maa is a super good example of collective work, and - of course, I don't have experience yet outside the school - but there is a lot of talk around taking away the gallery fees, etc.
- RT: I feel like there is a bright future ahead of us in that sense, especially in Finland, because I noticed that a lot of people are talking about it and working on it, and there is a lot of talk about the idea of collectivity and how to work in a collective. It's nice to see really inspiring collective works that actually try to re-create the system, and make it more playful.

RT:	As we talk about this, a lot of collectives come to mind, who are doing the work outside of the institutions and it's super cool. Thank you Asya for the conversation, and I think we can hand the mic to our colleagues.
AL:	Thank you Róza!
	VANESSA AND ERIKA IN CONVERSATION 14:25
Vanessa Uhlbäck:	Hi I'm Vanessa and I am currently studying art history at the University of Helsinki.
Erika Ryppeiva:	Hello I'm Erika, I'm on my gap year and I'm thinking of studying arts, for example set design and film really interest me... I'm kind of figuring stuff out.
VU:	Does working in an organisation bring a certain safety to working and bringing up our own voices: [comparing] working in an organisation vs working independently?
ER:	At this age I feel super uncertain in the artworld, so for me safety is for sure something I perceive from an organisation, because I feel more certain in voicing my opinions, and also being in an organisation makes the collective work more the focus and there's more space for conversations and different opinions and learning.
VU:	I definitely agree. I think working in an organisation does bring a certain safety, which is definitely something that I feel like I need at this point in my career. I think working in an organisation has definitely been the best possible option right now; thinking about all of us, not just because of our ages, but also because of the place we're at in our careers, most of us are just looking for ourselves and thinking about what we want to do.
ER:	It's also inspiring seeing how each of us brings up our own voice: it inspires me, for example, to speak up and voice opinions; and I think that working independently would be too scary almost.
VU:	It has definitely opened up a lot of doors that wouldn't have been open for us had we been working independently. For example, all the artists that we've met and all the things that we've been able to do.

PUBLICS

- ER: Being with an organisation also brings a lot of history of what has happened within the organisation into our work as well: it is super nice to have all this background playing beneath us.
- VU: It's not just us representing ourselves: it is also us representing an organisation - an organisation that has trusted us and has hired us, which proves that there is something in us to believe in.
- ER: How do you feel that PUBLICS and PUBLICS Youth differ from each other? In terms of how we represent ourselves in public: do you feel that there's pressure from PUBLICS to have a certain voice, or to represent something specific?
- VU: The only pressure that we have - or at least most of it - is from ourselves. Most of us probably put a lot of pressure on ourselves because we are not just representing ourselves, but we're representing an organisation. I feel like we all feel the need to to be good enough, to prove that we are good enough.
- ER: When I'm thinking of pressure there's nothing that comes to my mind from PUBLICS, other than the challenges I face with my own mind and with my own insecurities of feeling enough to be in this position; and it's nice to notice that it's such a safe space, that the only pressure is really coming from the appreciation to this position and to being in this job.
- VU: There is a lot of guidance that we get, and I feel like that has helped with the pressure that we feel: because it's not just, you know, us aimlessly wandering around thinking "what are we doing here? and what are we representing?", but there's a structure, and we have been given help, and we've been led in a certain way and direction.
- ER: And also it helps that we're working really collectively. That is also a difference between PUBLICS and PUBLICS Youth, because none of us have a certain position or a certain role inside this group, and we do this work as a shared responsibility; which is different from PUBLICS, where everyone has a certain role. It also has helped that we're collectively lost and that we're guided into these conversations by the questions that we are given. It has been super nice, because the conversations that have awoken from these questions have been significant. For example, one thing that really struck me was thinking about curating and how it can be approached in different manners: from feeling [for example]. I remember this talk we had with Max Hannus: it was amazing to detach from explaining everything, and just focus on "I feel like you're an interesting artist and I'm crushing on you, so

- VU: I will invite you to this project”. The question Max asked - I remember it was something like: “what do we do on a daily basis, and how can we incorporate that in our daily work?” - it was super nice, because it made me realise that I want to work with music, and incorporate my work with music because it’s a big part of my life.
- ER: Yeah, just to get that concrete know-how of how things are done, and that concrete example of “this is how I did my work, and this is how you can do your work in the future”.
- ER: It’s also been so freeing to see all these different experiences from different artists, and to know that there’s many paths.
- VU: This definitely brings us to the next question, which is: how can we utilise this experience for our own individual needs and wishes? And does our background affect our needs and wishes?
- ER: I do feel like the background affects it. It reminds me of how you spoke of guidance, and I feel that, because I’m on a gap year, I do need a lot of guidance and it has been super nice to get guidance into the artworld: for example, to know more about the schools and the internship opportunities. It was just amazing.
- VU: I now feel like I have more of that know-how to do things and to approach different projects that I would maybe want to do in the future: in terms of curating, for example.
- ER: I feel you with the approach to projects, because it has been so nice to base our projects on the conversations that we’ve had. So I think that’s something that will stick with me.
- VU: I also feel like us working together as a collective is not over after this year is over: I feel that we might definitely continue working together with this collective - or some of us.
- ER: Yes, and also I feel like I’ve made friends here, which is super nice.
- VU: I definitely agree.

VALERIIA AND MANDA IN CONVERSATION 23:42

Valeriia
Masliukova-Malova:

Hi my name is Valeriia, I’m 20 years old and I’m studying art history. I’m Manda and I’m 20 years old as well, and I’m very interested in

Manda
Loipponen:

contemporary art. My first question will be: in our experience how do people from different generations experience and approach art?

VM:

Let's start from who we are! We are young people working on contemporary art, exploring cultural aspects of its life, and expressing our own points of view. During this year we talked to people of different ages about art. For example, you had a really amazing experience with Index and PRAKSIS, right?

ML:

Yes, we got to know a lot of people from Index [Teen Advisory Board] and PRAKSIS [Teen Advisory Board]. It was kind of a workshop, it was over a video call, and we all set in this big room, and it was a very interesting experience because we haven't talked so much to people outside of our age group this year. So it was quite nice.

VM:

It was a very good time to practise working abroad.

ML:

And it was really interesting because we are neighbouring countries but we still don't usually work together.

VM:

We have done a lot of work with different professional artists and curators. I remember we had a really great artist, and he's also a teacher, and he's a really really sunny and humorous person: he is Harold Offeh. Most of the work with him was devoted to creating our workshops. During the time when we were discussing this new project with Harold, he [mentioned] one of the issues of our time - I'll quote him: "age as a taboo topic". To my mind, this theme is relevant for today and for our conversation as well, even out of the context of that workshop. You know, I think that we see these distinctions of generations even at the household level, and what can we say about the professional one! Actually, it is interesting how things operate a little differently at work: when everyone is united [towards] a common cause, and you do not think about the difference in age. Manda, what do you think about this taboo topic? I think that when you travelled abroad and worked there, there might [have] been some difficulties?

ML:

Personally, for myself, I didn't see that many difficulties. I mean: yes, there were very different age groups, and different generations from mine, but we could still work together and we had actually quite a lot in common. This is interesting because the age didn't matter because the art brought us together. I agree with Harold that age can be quite a taboo subject.

VM:

Let's think back to the exhibition we saw last winter!

ML:

Do you mean the ARS22 exhibition in Kiasma?

VM:

Exactly. It was impressive. I remember I was there in the museum space, in a dark room with red lighting and a plush carpet covering the floor. The room's temperature, which matches our body temperature, was 36.6 degrees. I was sitting in this space for a long time, watching the video that was there on the screen. I got a feeling of the highest degree of security, comforts and love from everything around me. It felt like I was back inside my mother's belly: it was utterly delightful.

ML:

There was this one video that got especially stuck in my mind, by a Vietnamese artist called Tuan Andrew [Nguyen]. It was about this tiger and it was telling about how this tiger is part of their daily life, and how the tiger means a lot to people. I don't remember every part of it, but it was quite touching: it really left an impact on me after watching it.

VM:

Do you remember we met another artist, their name is Max: I remember that you talked a lot to me about the work.

ML:

Yes, we had a workshop with Max Hannus, they're a curator based in Helsinki working in the intersection of sexual sexual romantic relationships and art making. They showed us a slideshow, showing us their art, and they told us a quite personal story about one of their art shows, because they have a personal love story behind it.

VM:

It was very touching, I liked it a lot. What do you think: how could their work impact us, on PUBLICS Youth?

ML:

Well I think it could be that our generation could share more their emotions and feelings because, yes of course people share their feelings, but maybe not always in art in such a personal way. So I think this can help us to express ourselves.

VM:

That's true because usually people don't express their feelings, but in this case Max's art is like PUBLICS Youth's mirror: because when we're working with art, going to some exhibitions, and having discussions with different professional artists and curators, we always share our feelings a lot.

ML:

I think that good art should stir up emotions.

VM:

I felt comfortable being with Harold, because we talked a lot with him and our conversation was really honest and open. I remember once we went to a contemporary art gallery: we were just walk-

ing around in the space for a long time in silence, but after that when we went to the café, we discussed it so impressively that I thought “oh right! That’s how all dialogue with artists can be”. I think with PUBLICS we fell in love with art!

We would like to thank:

Annabelle Antas, Annika Bergvik-Forsander, David Blamey, Valentina Černiauskaitė, Micol Curatolo, Laia Estruch, Max Hannus, Juha Huuskonen, Nicholas Jones, Tellervo Kalleinen, Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen, Samantha Lippett, Marti Manen, Irina Mutt, Laura Naukkarinen, Tiitu Nykanen, Paul O’Neill, Harold Offeh, Orlan Ohtonen, Sayed Sattar Hasan, Anni Ruppenen, Marit Silsand, Eliisa Suvanto, Isabella Tjäder, the members of Index Teen Advisory Board and PRAKSIS Teen Advisory Board, Nuori Taide, the Open Up European network, Nordic Culture Point, Erasmus + Mundus. Podcast recording and editing by Tellervo and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen.